

Interpreting African-American History in the National Parks

The study and interpretation of African-American history discussed in the following examples illustrate the comprehensive attempt by the National Park Service to tell this story to the American people. In recent years with new scholarship, historians have come to understand more of the wide breath and depth of this story and its relationship to the overall fabric of American history. The National Park Service will continue to work with our partners to see that all sites in the national park system associated with this history are preserved and interpreted for the education and enjoyment of the American people.

Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve, Jacksonville, FL

At Kingsley Plantation themes of slavery and the struggle for freedom for the black population of antebellum Florida are explored. From the intriguing remains of 23 tabby slave cabins to the restored plantation house of Zephaniah Kingsley and his African wife Anna Jai, Kingsley Plantation is the setting for a story of conflict and survival. Through exhibits, daily ranger programs, tours for educational groups, and special events, visitors learn of African heritage and life in slavery. From multiracial Spanish colonial Florida to American territorial Florida, the site illustrates the effects of changing policies and practices on people of color—free and enslaved.

Brian Peters

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, Fredericksburg, VA

Chatham is a colonial plantation manor house which was used as a federal headquarters, artillery position, and hospital during the Battle of Fredericksburg. Among the display panels inside the building is an *Antebellum 19th Century* exhibit, containing information about the January 2, 1805 slave insurrection at Chatham; an advertisement to sell the Chatham estate, including 230 slaves; and the will of one of Chatham's owners, which includes the desire that some slaves be manumitted.

Ten African-American soldiers are interred in the Fredericksburg National Cemetery (five Civil War era, and five post-Civil War era). Maps indicating the locations of the graves are available as handouts at the Fredericksburg Battlefield National Cemetery.

One of the key Confederate artillery positions on the Fredericksburg Battlefield was the Bemard Cabins—a cluster of modest dwellings where Alfred Bernard's slaves resided. A recent trail to the site will contain interpretive markers yet to be installed.

Greg Mertz

Boston African-American National Historic Site, Boston, MA

To Freedom's Land

Through puppetry, visitors learn about Lewis Hayden, Harriet Tubman, and William Lloyd Garrison, and their trials and tribulations as they traveled on the Underground Railroad. Visitors also learn about Boston's 19th-century Abolitionists and the free African community that successfully sought to end slavery.

From Boston Harbor We Set Sail

Join the staff from Boston African-American National Historic Site and the Kendall Whaling Museum for a fun-filled day of activities as you learn about African Americans in the Maritime Industry. For more information or a teachers curriculum guide, call Boston African-American National Historic Site at 617-742-5415, or the Kendall Whaling Museum at 617-784-5642.

The Black Heritage Trail

The Black Heritage trail is a 1.6-mile walking tour. See 15 19th-century historic sites and tour the African Meeting House. Learn about the oldest extant free Black Baptist Church and the largest concentration of pre-civil war black-owned structures in the United States. Learn about the free African-American community that protested to not only to end slavery, but fought tirelessly to enhance the quality of life regarding issues of education, housing, employment, etc. Slides are available for loan.

Resisting for Justice

Experience first hand how people in Boston have protested against laws that they thought were unfair. This program uses role play to explore two different historical instances of protest. Students will learn about events that shape the present and discover how to stand up for what they believe in.

First, at the Old South Meeting House students take on the role of actual patriots and loyal-

ists who debated the tax on tea. Then, at the African Meeting House, they learn how Boston's citizens protested the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.

Kenneth A. Heidelberg

Ford's Theatre National Historic Site, Washington, DC

Freedom Fighters Museum Exhibit

Ford's Theatre is proud to present Freedom Fighters, a special museum exhibit relating the story of African-American soldiers during the Civil War. This exhibit includes period photographs, newspapers, and other artifacts.

(February-May 1996)

Jeffrey Leary

They Also Served: African-American Women and the Union Cause

This program examines the unique contributions made by African-American women on behalf of the Union war effort. Over the course of the Civil War these women—some free, some slaves—made invaluable contributions as nurses, spies, teachers, and reformers.

From "General" Harriet Tubman to the quiet Susie King Taylor, discover how these women helped win the war. This program includes an exhibit.

(February 5 and March 5, 1996)

Karen Byrne

Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, St. Louis, MO

In addition to Jefferson National Expansion Memorial's (JNEM) interpretive themes of westward expansion and the struggles for civil rights, the urban location of the park brings with it the important responsibility of presenting National Park Service messages to an urban audience. Each year, programs are given to nearly 140,000 students, teachers, scouts, and educational groups of all ages, a sizable group of people for whom concepts such as biodiversity, conservation, recycling, and a drug-free America can be emphasized.

Despite the fact that more than 50,000 students attend regular and special Museum Education Programs annually at JNEM, however, there are thousands of others who do not have that opportunity. Traveling trunks, which serve as mini-museums, help bridge this gap. The philosophy behind the program is, "if the people can't come to the museum, send the museum to the people." Traveling trunks are full-sized footlockers packed with tools, utensils, clothing, games, toys, maps, posters, slides, videotapes, books, and other instructional materials. Subjects covered by the traveling trunks include African-American heritage.

Information on educational programs at JNEM, including Traveling Trunks, may be obtained by calling 314-425-6010.

Beneath the Gateway Arch is the **Museum of Westward Expansion**, which tells the story of the United States' 19th-century expansion from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. From the Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the farmers settling the Great Plains, the museum interprets 100 years of American history. Artifacts, quotes, and photographs fill the Museum and provide an excellent atmosphere for learning about the westward expansion movement.

Programs in the Museum of Westward Expansion:

The Lewis and Clark Expedition. This tour, which teaches about the people, animals, and lands encountered by the explorers of 1804-06, includes information on York, William Clark's slave, who accompanied the expedition and served as an equal member from start to finish.

Trappers and Traders. This program covers the lives and dangers faced by mountainmen such as Kit Carson and Jim Bridger, as well as James P. Beckwourth and other African-American trappers.

Cowboys. The life of the 19th-century cowboy is discussed, including the roles of African-American cowboys, who made up at least 1/5 of those who worked at this trade during the period.

Farmers. This program investigates what it's like to live in a house made of soil and grass with wooden crates for furniture and newspapers fashioned into window curtains. The struggles and accomplishments of the early farmers who homesteaded on the Great Plains are celebrated, including the African Americans who settled such towns as Nicodemus, Kansas.

African Americans of the West. A survey program which covers the important roles played by African-American explorers, mountainmen, soldiers, cowboys, miners, and homesteaders during America's 19th-century westward expansion movement.

Completed in 1862, the **Old Courthouse** provides a unique learning environment. Its elaborately-decorated rotunda, restored courtrooms, and St. Louis history galleries make it an attractive place for visits year-round. The Old Courthouse was brought into the National Park Service in 1940, primarily because of its historic association with the nationally-significant Dred Scott case. This makes the Old Courthouse the oldest National Park Service area created because of its association with African-American heritage.

Programs in the Old Courthouse:

The Dred Scott Trial. The Dred Scott case is the most famous trial in the history of the Old Courthouse. This program considers the second trial of Dred and Harriet Scott held in the building in 1850, allowing visitor participation and interaction through the use of a reading script taken from

historical records of the trial itself. The program is conducted in one of the building's historic court-rooms.

Freedom School. In 1847, Missouri passed a law forbidding the education of African Americans. This program shows how African Americans were secretly educated in St. Louis despite this law. Park rangers help groups recreate a "freedom" school in a remote room of the Old Courthouse.

Williams vs. Bellefontaine Railway. In 1867, Mrs. Caroline Williams, a young, pregnant African-American woman, and her two-year-old child were pushed out of a St. Louis streetcar by the conductor because the company had a policy which did not allow African Americans to ride inside. Mrs. Williams sued for damages at the Old Courthouse, and her trial is dramatically recreated by visitors using a prepared script in one of the historic courtrooms.

African-American Heritage of St. Louis. The contributions of African Americans to the development of St. Louis are discussed. Topics may include Dred Scott, slavery, the Underground Railroad, Scott Joplin, music, art, and sports figures such as "Cool Papa" Bell of the black baseball leagues.

Museum Stores at JNEM feature a wide variety of materials, books and videos relating to African-American heritage in the West and in St. Louis. A catalog and mail-order service is available; call 1-800-537-7962.

Mark Engler

Hampton National Historic Site, Towson, Maryland

Hampton National Historic Site preserves 62 acres of land with a Georgian mansion, finished in 1790, and associated outbuildings and gardens. One family, the Ridgelys, owned the property until 1948. At its peak in the 1820s, the estate was an agricultural-industrial complex of over 24,000 acres, depending on an ironworks as well as crops and livestock.

The tour of Hampton Mansion, offered daily on the hour from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., includes discussion of the enslaved African Americans at Hampton. Fourth and eighth grade curriculum packets, available on request, also incorporate aspects of African-American history at Hampton. In addition, Hampton offers a grounds tour including the Farm House, stables, and slave quarters. This tour incorporates data from Ridgely family papers, so that visitors learn about slaves' names, ages, physical descriptions, jobs, family relationships, and experiences (manumission, escape, illness, etc.). Interpretive materials will be updated through ongoing research into the rich store of records kept by the Ridgelys and a search for

descendants of Ridgely slaves and the insights they can provide on their family histories.

Jenny Masur

Charles Pinckney National Historic Site, Sullivan's Island, SC

The Charles Pinckney NHS is a recent addition to the national park system. The primary focus is Charles Pinckney's involvement in the development of the U.S. Constitution, the early history of the United States, and Snee Farm, his plantation site. African-American contributions to the development of Pinckney's Snee Farm plantation included agricultural activities and specialized trade skills. In addition, archeological investigation is being interpreted to provide information about the daily life of slaves on site. These facts and an explanation of sweetgrass basket making, which parallels low country Gullah culture with that of West Africa are displayed as well.

A new video is currently in production. This will incorporate African-American contributions here on the plantation. In addition, we are developing Parks as Classrooms materials which include a teacher's guide and a classroom program. Both will feature the impact and influence of African Americans on Pinckney's life-style.

Our sales area (ENP&MA) has a variety of worthwhile titles which cover the contributions, life-styles, and influences of African-Americans during the Colonial Era through the development of the new nation.

Michael Allen

Chiricahua National Monument, Wilcox, AZ

Chiricahua NM is very proud of its Buffalo soldier history. The Faraway Ranch Historic District includes the story of the Tenth Cavalry, Troops E, H, and I. These men were part of General Crooks campaign to keep Geronimo away from known watering holes. The troopers established semi-permanent Camp Bonita in September 1885 and remained until September 1886. Today, there is evidence of their stay in the form of a magnificent fireplace in the Faraway Ranch House. Sixty stones are carved with the names of those men—stones they carved themselves.

Kate Neilsen

Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg, PA

Gettysburg has recently developed an interpretive wayside exhibit that describes the impact of the battle on two free African-American property owners. The primary subject, Abraham Brian, owned a farm located at the center of the Union battleline near Ziegler's Grove. Heavy fighting raged around the farm, particularly on July 3, dur-

ing the Pickett-Pettigrew Charge. The wayside highlights the personal impact of the fighting on Brian, his family, and property, and will be installed sometime this spring/early summer.

Brion Fitzgerald

Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia, PA

Independence offers tours, talks, a dramatic presentation, exhibits, free publications, and many items available in the museum shops which all focus on the role and accomplishments of African Americans during the time period interpreted at the park.

"Rachel Hatcher: Looking to Freedom," is a dramatic 30-minute presentation written and performed by park ranger Ajena Rogers. Ms. Rogers used historical records, letters, spirituals, slave narratives, and books to create this drama which explores aspects of slavery and freedom and the relationships of those times between the black and white communities.

Second Bank of the United States:

African-American Moses Williams operated a physiognotrace (silhouette making) machine in the first public museum in America, once located in Independence Hall. His ability caused the silhouettes' popularity to soar, making him highly successful. Demonstrations and Williams story.

Tours and lectures:

Outdoor walking tours given periodically throughout the year include "African Americans in the Capital City," focusing on the black experience in Philadelphia; and "The Yellow Fever Epidemic-Crisis—in the Capital," about the epidemic of 1793 and the roles African-Americans Absalom Jones and Richard Allen played in combatting the illness.

Mary O. Reinhart

Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, Elverson, PA

Hopewell Furnace site bulletin, *African-Americans at Hopewell Furnace*, discusses the important role played by African Americans in the construction and operations of Hopewell Furnace and in building the local communities of Six Penny Creek and Mt. Frisby.

Frank Hebblethwaite

Booker T. Washington National Monument, Hardy, VA

Booker T. Washington National Monument is one of only a few units of the national park system with a primary interpretive theme of African-American history. Using tours, exhibits, videos, storytelling, special programs, and educational packets for students, the park interprets the realities of 19th-century slavery in Piedmont Virginia,

the quest by black Americans for education and equality, and the post-Civil War struggle for political participation which shaped the life of Booker T. Washington.

Qefiri Colbert

Boston National Historical Park, Boston, MA

"It was a summer day in Boston in 1761 more than 200 years ago, when a slave ship landed at Beach Street wharf. This ship brought about 80 Africans, kidnapped from their homes, to be sold in American as slaves.

"One of these Africans was a seven year old girl. A woman named Susannah Wheatley bought the small girl for a low price. This frail girl would later be known to the world as Phillis Wheatley. She would become a famous poet and write the first book ever published by an African American."

Thus, begins a biography of Phillis Wheatley for our **Parks as Classrooms** fifth grade program, "Published Poet: Phillis Wheatley" at Boston National Historical Park and one of our collaborative historic sites, the Old South Meeting House. In this 90 minute program, fifth-grade Boston school children explore the life and writing of an extraordinary woman with a visit to the Old South Meeting House where Phillis became a member when she was 17.

Educator Jane Schwertfeger from Old South developed this program and wrote the pre-visit materials. She presents this program with Boston National Historical Park rangers. "Published Poet: Phillis Wheatley" is part of two programs focusing on two 18th-century women and their writings. In the other program, fifth graders visit Adams National Historic Site in Quincy, Massachusetts to learn about Abigail Adams through her letters. Students discover the distinct differences in the lives of Abigail Adams and Phillis Wheatley, yet they might also notice the similarities among women of the 18th-century era.

Sheila Cooke-Kayser

Fort Davis National Historic Site, Fort Davis TX

As part of normal non-personal services during the entire year, visitors may access a military field equipment exhibit which focuses on the issue used by the buffalo soldiers and their accomplishments in the region in the early 1880s. Next to this is a completely furnished barracks squad-room. Interpretive panels for off-season reference, and costumed staff in the summer, highlight the building's occupancy from 1875 to 1885 by Troop H of the 10th Cavalry, one of the African-American units at Fort Davis.

The commanding officer's quarters is furnished to reflect the time of Benjamin Grierson's

residence. Grierson led the 10th Cavalry; a permanent photo and text exhibit in the building emphasizes his role and expert guidance of the buffalo soldiers. Next to the ruins of the post chapel is a wayside sign with text and illustrations concerning the court-martial of Henry O. Flipper there in 1880. Flipper was an officer with Troop A of the 10th Cavalry from 1877 to 1881.

Plans for major rehab of the park museum and production of a site video include a more balanced account of the African-American contribution to the fort's history. Both projects have been in the planning and "request" stages for over 10 years.

Allan Morris

African-Americans at Hopewell Furnace

Built by African Americans

For the 112 year history of Hopewell Furnace (1771-1883) African-Americans played an important role in one of the area's most active industries.

The builder of the furnace, Mark Bird, was a slave owner along with most ironmasters in the 18th century. In 1780 Bird was listed as the largest slave owner in Berks County. He had 10 men, 4 women, 3 boys and 1 girl.

These slaves worked at his forges in Birdsboro and are said to have dug Hopewell's original headrace which turned the water wheel supplying air to fire the furnace. Over 220 years after the erection of the furnace, visitors can see remnants of the east headrace near the Big House. Although slavery in Berks County declined rapidly after 1780 when the Assembly passed an act ordering gradual emancipation, African-Americans continued to work at Hopewell. "Black Bill" Jacobs lived his entire life of about 100 years at Hopewell, working first as a teamster and then as a coachman and a gardener.

A Safe Haven

Some of Hopewell's African-American workers lived in the nearby forest. Beginning in 1835 this remote area around Hopewell Furnace figured prominently in the Underground Railroad. Runaway slaves came across the Hopewell hills to the home of Elizabeth Scarlett and her son Joseph, the Quaker owners of Scarlett's Mill. Here a community founded by African-Americans from the South who had reclaimed their free-

dom grew up in the valley of Six Penny Creek close to Hopewell Furnace, Joanna Furnace and forges in Birdsboro.

Many former slaves earned their living in the iron industry as woodcutters, colliers and teamsters. Some, such as Isaac Cole, became landowners too.

Fuel for the Furnace

The names of runaway slaves employed as woodcutters were probably not entered in the furnace records in order to protect their identity. Some may have worked for contractors without showing up in the Hopewell Furnace records.

Other African-American workers such as Draper Nixon, Edward Ford, Stephen Brown, Peter and Henry Jones, John Allen, John Hart and Joseph Tolbert were credited in nineteenth century Hopewell journals for cutting cordwood used to produce charcoal to fuel the furnace. African Americans also worked as teamsters, hostlers, colliers, miners, fillers and maids.



The Mount Frisby AME Church

In 1856 the African-American community at Six Penny Creek established an African Methodist Episcopal Church on land owned by the Cole family. This church served as a station stop on the Underground Railroad and is the site of the oldest known African-American cemetery in Berks County. Many African-Americans who worked at Hopewell are buried here. The cemetery, carefully restored and maintained by the Cole family, serves as a silent reminder of the once thriving African-American community that helped fuel the iron industry in southern Berks County.

Adapted from Hopewell Furnace site bulletin.